

Exploring Crisis Management and Business Continuity among Nigerian Small and Medium
Scale Enterprises

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Abstract

Crisis management is widely researched but not among SMEs and not particularly in emerging economies. Using a combination of interview and survey techniques, we explore how Nigerian SMEs perceive and deal with crisis, and motivations as well as practices adopted for engaging in crisis planning. Specifically, we consider the impacts of actual experience, crisis awareness and top management attitude on crisis management planning. An interpretive approach was adopted for the analysis as was use of quantitative statistical package. Our results indicate that the level of awareness generates a higher degree of concern for crisis management planning than both top management attitudes and actual crisis experience, and a lack of awareness significantly limits firms' preparedness for crisis management and business continuity.

Keywords: Crisis management planning, Business continuity, SME

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Introduction

While previous studies have sought to understand what organisations have, in terms of plans and resources, as well as perception of managers in relation to crisis management in large organisations, few researches have examined small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in similar contexts (Herbane, 2010; Runyan, 2006; Spillan and Hough, 2003). Furthermore, although many large organizations have well-developed plans for crisis management, there is still a major challenge posed by improper implementation of crisis management processes and this is a risk that cannot only lead to significant losses for organizations but adversely affect the environment (Sriraj and Khisty, 1999). Whilst this is largely recognised by big firms, the perception is quite different among SMEs where little or no attention is paid to crisis and continuity planning for reasons ranging from false sense of immunity to adequate considerations (Spillan and Hough, 2003). Invariably, SME operators are often unaware and ill-prepared to effectively respond to crisis situations. This poses particular concern among emerging economies where SMEs make significant contributions to the economy and are considered to be the backbone for industrialization and economic growth (Onugu, 2005).

For instance, in Nigeria SMEs represent 97% of all businesses, 70% of industrial employment and 50% of industrial output (Olutunla and Obamuyi, 2008; Okpara, 2009). Despite the economic relevance of SMEs however, firms in this category are highly susceptible to risks and crises. Furthermore, research focus has predominantly been on understanding the post-crisis management stage even among SMEs and there is limited research at pre-crisis stage on owner-managers' perceptions of concern for, and preparedness to deal with crisis situations (Doern, 2014). As such, our objective in this paper is to explore how SMEs in an emerging context perceive and deal with crisis. For the purpose of the study, we use the term crisis management planning (CMP) to refer to the combination of crisis identification, crisis assessment and crisis aftermath stages. Furthermore, we examine how Nigerian SMEs perceive threats to their business by evaluating the degree of concern for crisis management planning and possible strategies employed in dealing with disruptions. To achieve this we sought to address a range of questions on the effects of three key variables on SME plans for crisis situations as well as to explore the dependency of the degree of concern on these variables. The identified variables are; awareness of potential crisis situations, actual experience of crisis events and top management involvement.

Crisis management planning

Crisis management is broad in scope and is variously referred to by terms such as; 'business continuity' and 'business recovery', 'crisis management planning', 'disaster or emergency response', and 'emergency readiness' (Nyblom et al, 2003). The importance of crisis management planning as a key tool for growth and survival of an enterprise has long been established but not until recently has there been an emphasis on actual implementation of crisis management plans among SMEs (Sriraj and Kirsty, 1999; Spillan and Hough, 2003; Herbane et al, 2004; Herbane, 2013). Causes of crises are generally attributed to natural disasters such as flood, hurricane, tsunamis, tornados, earthquakes, or legal issues, which disrupt normal business functioning (Spillan and Hough, 2003; Brody and Schmittlein, 2012). These natural activities are often times described as 'acts of God' and this perception may cause SME owner-managers to be less inclined to CMP particularly in very religious environments such as Nigeria. Increasingly however, man-made crises such as acts of

terrorism and the consequent insecurity are contributing to crises experiences of firms (Okpaga et al, 2012; Ross, 2014).

Whilst it may be difficult to effectively plan for natural disasters, Low et al (2010) nevertheless argue that determining suitable strategies and mechanisms for dealing with interruptions is key to the ability of organisations to deal with crisis situations. . Such suitable strategies could range from people and other stakeholders that may contribute to the CMP process to premises and technological considerations (Business Continuity Institute, 2007; Garette, 2012). The role of people is particularly emphasised in literature as Perman (2009) that a prime consideration for organisations in ensuring operational effectiveness and preventing financial loss is for them to preserve expert knowledge and avoid sudden loss of key staff. Similarly, Hough and Spillan (2005) noted that staff experience is a major factor for consideration for any organisation wishing to develop effective crisis management plans.

Crisis management in SMEs

Research suggests that small businesses that have experienced crisis in the past show more concern towards crisis events than those that have not experienced such crisis (Spillan and Hough, 2003; Mikusova, 2011; Herbane, 2013). Unfortunately however, there is a general view that most SMEs do not start crisis management planning until after an actual catastrophic experience. For instance, Spillan and Hough (2003) observed that the majority of SME managers in the United States were aware of the impact of crises on their organisations but only organisations with prior crisis experience had effective crisis management plans in place to deal with potential threats. In this regard, they observed that experience influences the extent to which individuals and organisations worry about future crisis. That is, prior experience of crisis leads to a higher degree of concern for crisis among SMEs. Herbane (2013) however suggests that experience of crisis by an organisation does not directly reflect in their attitude to CMP as crisis experience may not affect attitude towards planning.

Beyond experience of actual crisis events, other factors may generate concern for crisis management among SMEs. For instance Taback's (1991) suggested that crisis managers could assess potential crises which their organizations might be exposed to by examining the crisis experienced by other organizations. In so doing, a particular organization could also develop concern for similar crisis events, without personally experiencing it. Furthermore, Mikusova (2011) noted that most SME managers with clear insight to what constitutes crisis management planning tend to be better prepared for crisis situations. Spillan and Crandall (2002) also noted that awareness of a potential crisis happening may lead to effective planning, which for instance could be through education by third parties. Herbane (2010) however opines that this is less effective in changing the focus of SME managers as opposed to if the crisis is experienced first-hand (Herbane, 2010). Similarly, Fink (1986) and Simbo (1993) argued that increased awareness of the importance of crisis management planning amongst corporate executives does not lead to an implementation of a plan for their companies. Indeed, there is the argument that of equal importance is the mindset of owner-managers in dealing with crisis as crisis situations can still be effectively managed where there is a lack of experience in as much as owner-managers have the right mindset in terms of attitudes and interpretation of situations (Doern, 2014).

According to Sullivan (2012), the effectiveness of CMP in an organisation is arguably based on the level of importance attached by top management. For instance, where there is little importance attached to the occurrence of crisis by top management, firms may not see the need to prepare and plan for the crisis. In this regard, Vargo and Seville (2011) argue that top management must recognise that at some point in the organisation's life, the occurrence of a crisis transits from a slight possibility to a point of inevitability. Mikusova (2011) further observed that 64% of sampled top managers did not consider crisis management as important because they believed that it is pointless planning for crisis with the view that the crisis will develop differently from what was planned. There is however a cost dimension attached to Mikusova's observation as all the case respondents also opined that the cost of planning for crisis is too high and so they do not see the need to plan. Invariably, if top management were to develop a favourable mind-set to crisis management, then there would be a greater likelihood of both the top management and the organisation being prepared to deal with crisis issues. Importantly, Spillan and Hough (2003) argue that forecasting for a crisis and planning for it may make its occurrence less expensive and traumatic, and this view is supported by McCray et al. (2011), who suggest that any management able to forecast and plan for a turning point in its firm stands a better chance of taking advantage of crisis events and turning them into opportunities.

From the foregoing, although the role of management is evidently important in understanding the disposition of SMEs to crisis events, there are gaps in our understanding of how certain factors contribute to concern for crisis management planning among such SMEs. As such in this paper, we critically examine contributory factors to the degree of concern for crisis management planning among SMEs in the Nigerian context. Furthermore, and significantly, we pose the question; is the degree of concern for crisis management planning dependent more on the actual experience of crisis, the awareness of crisis management planning, or top management attitude towards crisis events in Nigerian SMEs?

Methodology

A mixed method approach was taken in undertaking this research with the first phase involving collection of qualitative data through interviews and the second phase employing survey data collection using questionnaires. Whilst an interpretive approach was employed in the first phase to gain preliminary insight into how prepared Nigerian SMEs were for dealing with crisis situations, a more explanatory approach was adopted in the second phase in order to investigate the relationship between the degree of concern for crisis management planning as a dependent variable and actual crisis experience of the organisation, awareness of crisis management planning, and the top management attitude toward crisis event as independent variables (Saunders *et al.* 2012).

The rationale for using the interview method was to gauge perceptions of crisis issues among industry actors; hence we conducted interviews with a purposive judgmental sample of seven respondents across four states in the country; six business owners and an SME manager (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). The interviews were semi-structured in nature and were conducted using both face-to-face and Skype web-conferencing; they lasted between 30mins to 45mins (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). Interview questions were posed to respondents in order to identify what aspects of organizational activities were deemed critical, instances of possible disruptions and how these were or might be dealt with. The choice of survey on the other hand was predicated on prior research, which had similarly used surveys in studying

crisis management among SMEs (Spillan and Hough, 2003; Runyan, 2006; Herbane, 2010). Both sets of data were collected over a four week time-frame.

Table 1: Interview Respondents Profile

Respondent No.	Status	Business Type	Location	Years of Operation
IR1	Owner	Currency Trading	Kano	2
IR2	Owner	Human Capacity Development & Training Company	Benin	4
IR3	Owner	Logistics	Lagos	10
IR4	Owner	Building Construction	Abuja	10
IR5	Owner	IT Consultancy & Project Management	Lagos	11
IR6	Manager	Telecoms, Events Management & Properties	Lagos	7
IR7	Owner	Paint and Chemical Manufacturing	Lagos	5

Using multi-stage probability sampling, we randomly sampled Lagos State from among the south western states of Nigeria (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). 500 SMEs were randomly selected and sampled from the list of registered SMEs in the state. 149 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 29.8%. We deemed this acceptable due to the sensitivity of the topic under investigation and similarity of the response rate to previous studies (see Herbane, 2013).

The questionnaire survey consisted of six sections with a total of 43 items. The first section dealt with demographic characteristics while sections two to five collected data using a five-point Likert scale. Section II measured respondents' own crisis experience along 5 categories (with 22 specific items); operations, fraudulent activities, publicity, natural disasters and legal crisis. Section III measured awareness of other organisations having experienced crises across the 5 categories above, section IV considered respondents' awareness of crisis management planning, whilst section V dealt with respondents concern for CMP and section 6 evaluated top management attitudes towards crisis.

Research Questions

Although many SMEs are not unaware of the effect of crisis on their businesses and often put minimal contingent measures in place, they nevertheless fail to implement crisis planning activities. As a result of the seeming gap between awareness of crisis and efforts regarding crisis planning, we posed the following questions and hypothesis:

Research Question 1: To what extent does the actual experience of crisis event give rise to concern for crisis management planning in Nigerian SMEs?

Research Question 2: Does the awareness of crisis management planning have an effect on the degree of concern for crisis management planning amongst Nigerian SMEs?

Research Question 3: To what extent does the top management attitude towards crisis event lead to concern for crisis management planning in Nigeria SMEs?

Hypothesis: The degree of concern for crisis management planning is dependent more on the actual experience of crisis than on the awareness of crisis management planning and top management attitude towards crisis events in Nigeria SMEs?

Analysis

For the preliminary interviews, we used NVivo to sort and classify emanating themes while IBM SPSS was used to analyse the survey data through a combination of descriptive analyses (central tendency, frequency distribution and dispersion) for demographic variables and inferential analyses (correlation and multiple regressions) to predict which of the variables generate more concern for CMP. We checked for survey data reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the following alpha coefficients applied: concern for crisis management planning (0.884); actual crisis experience (0.942); awareness of crisis management planning (0.798) and top management attitude (0.587) (Pallant, 2013). Given the relatively high value for actual experience and low scale value for top management attitude, the mean inter-item correlation values were additionally measured at 0.428 and 0.239 respectively, which are deemed satisfactory in this study.

Findings

The first phase of the research was aimed at exploring perceptions, awareness and likely considerations for crisis management plans among Nigerian SMEs. The respondents identified a range of factors which they considered as constituting potential threats to their businesses. These include; availability of key staff, loss of data, technology/internet disruptions, power failure, loss of company assets and workplace hazards. The data essentially revealed that all the respondents we spoke to felt that there were contingent strategies in place to help them deal with potential crisis issues in relation to their critical functions and as such ensure continuous operations of their businesses (see Table 2).

The data however shows that the methods adopted by the organisations to deal with perceived threats arising from the identified critical functions differ from one organisation to the other and are largely dependent on the organisation's core business operations. For instance, in response to mechanisms put in place to deal with loss of company assets, IR1 and IR2 revealed their organisations didn't have any particular strategy in place; but IR3 indicated that the threat is only covered by insurance; IR4 mentioned that the organisation has back up equipment' and good maintenance practices; IR5 revealed the organisation has an alternative premises from where technical processes are run and that the company assets are also covered by insurance; IR6 also mentioned that the organisation has an alternative premises available for building occupants. Finally, IR7 revealed that the organisation has a good maintenance practice and access to alternative firms for the extractor services; in addition, the organisation also has an insurance coverage.

Table 2: Summary of Phase 1 Respondents Views on Critical Functions and Coping Mechanisms

Critical Functions	Coping Mechanisms						
	IR1	IR2	IR3	IR4	IR5	IR6	IR7
Availability of Key Staff	Staff sent for training organized by regulatory body. Someone with little knowledge is available to stand-in.	There are trained volunteers and multiple trained staff.		Multi-skilled trained staff. Insurance cover on some staffs.	Multiple trained staff. Staff undergoes [sic] training.	Multiple trained staff.	
Suppliers	Reliance on government body as main supplier and other business partners suppliers		Alternative suppliers and vehicles to carry goods from suppliers	Alternative suppliers	Alternative suppliers	Alternative suppliers	Alternative suppliers for most products
Data Safety	Data saved on office computer and backed up on pen drive	Back up on hard drive and could backup system	Computer backup		Customer Relationship management (CRM) solution in place	e-copies are backed up on a server and cloud backup is done as well	Customer information stored on computers and hard copies.
Internet/ Technology Facility		Company is subscribed to two telecom companies.			Server is scaled down before it expires. Staff tools replicated offsite (2 machines run concurrently).	Backup mini satellite available to serve clients.	
Power Failure		Generators	Generators	Generators	Generators	Generators and inverter used	Generators
Succession Planning		Assistant available and assumes leadership when owner is not around.	Partner and son equally involved and adept to run business.	Son being groomed to run the business.	Training others to avoid business revolving round one particular person.		Not being considered at present time.
Loss of company assets			Covered by insurance.	Backup equipment and good maintenance practices.	Alternative premises where technical processes are kept Insurance cover.	Alternative premises available for building occupants.	Good maintenance practice and access to alternative firms for the extractor services. Insurance cover.
Workplace hazards			Extinguishers in event of fire outbreak & directional signs for evacuation. Alternative warehouse in event of flooding	Regular risk assessments and part insurance in place.		Alternative office for staff to resume work in event of flooding. Insurance cover.	Alternative premises. Fire extinguishers and switching off all electrical appliances at the end of day.

In the second phase of the research, we aimed to provide answers to the research questions and hypothesis by using correlation and multiple regression analyses. Specifically, when respondents were asked if their organisations had actual crisis experience, 69.1% responded in the affirmative with 28.9% indicating that their organisations had no experience of a crisis. However, in testing for internal consistency, when asked to consider a range of 22 ‘events’ (representative of possible crises) which the organisation might have been exposed to in the past, all respondents noted to have experienced a few of the events listed. This suggests the possibility of SME operators not being aware of what actually comprises a crisis event. A test for correlation was conducted in order to establish the relationship between the three independent variables and degree of concern for crisis management planning as a dependent variable. In addition, multiple regression analysis was used to predict the influence of the variables on the degree of concern for crisis management planning.

The effect that awareness of crisis management planning has on the degree of concern for crisis management planning amongst the SMEs was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a strong, positive correlation between awareness of CMP (independent variable) and concern for CMP (dependent variable); $r = .607$, $n = 147$, $p < .001$ (shown in Table 3), with high level of concern for crisis management planning associated with higher level of awareness of crisis management planning. Invariably, this implies that awareness of crisis management planning explains 36.8% of the variance of the respondents’ scores on their degree of concern for crisis management planning. As such there is a strong statistical significant relationship between the two variables as the awareness of crisis management planning has a positive effect on the degree of concern for crisis management planning amongst the SMEs.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Concern for CMP and Awareness of CMP

		Total concern for CMP	
		Total awareness of CMP	
Total concern for CMP	Pearson Correlation	1	.607**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	147	147
Total awareness of crisis management planning	Pearson Correlation	.607**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	147	147

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

With regards to actual experience, when asked to rate the impact of operational crisis experienced, in their organisations, 44.3% of the respondents revealed that the impact was insignificant, 6.7% revealed that the impact was minor, 3.4% indicated that the impact was moderate, 2.0% revealed that the impact was major, 4.0% of the respondents indicated that the impact of the experienced crisis on their organisation was severe while 39.6% indicated that they have never experienced such crisis. The impact of the experienced crisis on the organisations could be a key factor that contributed to this observation. There was a very low negative correlation between the two variables, $r = -.046$, $n = 129$, $p > 0.05$. As represented in Table 4 below, this implies that actual crisis experience explains 0.21% of the variance of the respondents’ scores on their degree of concern for crisis management planning. That is, there

was no statistical significant relationship established as actual experience of crisis does not give rise to concern for crisis management planning among the SMEs.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Concern for CMP and Actual Experience of Crisis Event

		Total Actual Crisis Experience	Total concern for CMP
Total Actual Crisis Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	-.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.604
	N	131	129
Total concern for CMP	Pearson Correlation	-.046	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.604	
	N	129	147

Finally, with respect to top management attitude, the analysis showed a strong, positive correlation with degree of concern, $r = .432$, $n = 147$, $p < .001$ (see Table 5), with high level of top management's attitude towards crisis events associated with higher degree of concern towards crisis management planning. As the two variables were statistically significant, the implication is that top management attitude towards crisis event explains 18.7% of the variance of the respondents score on concern for crisis management planning. Thus it can be deduced that to a large extent, top management attitude towards crisis event may lead to concern for crisis management planning.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis of Concern for CMP and Top Management Attitude

		Total Top Management Attitude towards Crisis Event	Total Concern for CMP
Total top management attitude towards crisis event	Pearson Correlation	1	.432**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	148	147
Total concern for CMP	Pearson Correlation	.432**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	147	147

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to investigate the relative dependence of degree of concern for crisis management planning on the three variables, standard multiple regression was employed. Preliminary analyses were first conducted to ensure that the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity were not violated. For example, Tolerance and VIF (Variance inflation factor) were used to check for the presence of multicollinearity. The result revealed that the tolerance values and the VIF values indicate non-violation of the multicollinearity assumption (tolerance values are above 0.10 and VIF values are below 10). This result is shown in Table 6.

The test recorded an R squared value of .414, which indicates that 41.4% of the variance in concern for crisis management planning is explained by actual experience of crisis, awareness of crisis management planning, and top management attitude towards crisis event. The model also reaches statistical significance (sig = .000; $p < .0005$). The result clearly shows that the degree of concern for crisis management strongly depends more on awareness of crisis management planning ($\beta = .508$) as opposed to top management attitude towards crisis event and actual crisis experience ($\beta = .239$; $\beta = .046$ respectively). The results were further confirmed by their significance unique contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable; awareness of crisis management planning made a more unique contribution (sig = .000), followed by top management attitude (.001), while actual experience of crisis made no significant unique contribution (.481). The part correlation coefficient also indicates that awareness of crisis management planning explains 21.2% of the variance in concern for crisis management planning. While top management attitude towards crisis event explains 4.7%, actual crisis experience contributes only 20%. We thus conclude that the degree of concern for crisis management planning is more dependent on the awareness of crisis management planning, although it could also depend on top management attitude towards crisis event, but its dependence on actual crisis experience is very insignificant.

Table 6: Multiple Regression of Concern for Crisis Management Planning - MODEL 1

	Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	Correlations	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta		Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		.001			
Total awareness of crisis management planning	.508	.000	.460	.820	1.219
Total Recorded top management attitude	.239	.001	.216	.811	1.234
Total Actual Crisis Experience	.046	.481	.045	.949	1.054
R Square = .414 Adjusted R Square = .402 Sig = .000					

An interesting observation was the suggestion that there could be relationship between degree of concern for crisis management planning and experience of crisis by other organisations. In order to investigate this, a reliability test was first conducted to ensure internal consistency of the scale used in measuring the constructs and a Cronbach's alpha result of .867 was obtained supporting consistency of the scale. Crisis experience of other organisations explains only 4% of variance of the respondents' scores on their degree of concern for crisis management planning and the results showed weak, positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .200$, $n = 143$, $p < 0.05$ (Table 7). Hence statistical significance exists between the two variables, which suggests a relationship between crisis experience of other organisations and the degree of concern for crisis management planning.

Table 7: Correlation Analysis of Concern for CMP and Crisis Experience of Other Organisations

		Total concern for CMP	Total Crisis Experience of other organisations
Total concern for CMP	Pearson Correlation	1	.200*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017
	N	147	143
Total Crisis Experience of other organisations	Pearson Correlation	.200*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
	N	143	145

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion and conclusions

Contrary to views that increased awareness of the importance of crisis management planning among corporate executives does little for crisis management plan implementation (Fink, 1986; Simbo, 1993), our research indicates that crisis management awareness has a very strong effect on the degree of concern for CMP. This is in line with the views that awareness of crisis management planning as well as education play significant role in generating concern and may lead SMEs to plan for potential threats (Spillan and Crandall, 2002; Spillan and Hough, 2003). Indeed, Mikusova (2011) has argued that many SMEs with clear ideas of what constitutes crisis management planning also prepare and plan for potential threats. This suggests, as evidenced by the finding of a strong positive correlation between awareness and concern, that to a large extent awareness of crisis management planning does generate concern for crisis management planning. One implication for SMEs is that getting themselves acquainted with crisis management planning will enable them to understand the types of crises applicable in their areas of business, as well as to identify potential threats and ways to manage such threats.

When it comes to actual experience it would appear that the SMEs with crisis experience in their organisations have a very low degree of concern for crisis management planning. Furthermore, a deeper evaluation of the nature of the crises experienced by respondent organizations showed that these were considered to range from minor to insignificant. Although the expectation is for small businesses with previous crisis experience to show more concern towards crisis management planning (Spillan and Hough, 2003), the finding is in concert with Herbane (2013) who opines that experience of crisis may not directly reflect in attitudes towards crisis management planning. A plausible explanation for this observation is the view that it takes a crisis of the magnitude and severity of near catastrophe to significantly influence a heightened concern for crisis management planning (Chastang, 2000).

Our findings also revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between crisis experienced by other organisations and the degree of concern for crisis management planning. This corroborates Taback's (1991) view that crisis managers could assess potential crisis which their organisation might be exposed to by examining the crisis experienced by other companies. In essence, the implication of this is that SMEs could develop a concern for crisis management planning as a result of their awareness of crisis event experienced by other organisations; but with a very low possibility of the awareness resulting to appreciable concern. However, we consider this to be favourable in the sense that such awareness still serves as a prompt for the SMEs as it allows them anticipate possible crises they may encounter (Spillan and Hough, 2003). One implication for SMEs is that to effectively be prepared for dealing with crisis risks and be assured of business survival, they should assess and identify those crises experienced by other organisations rather than wait for first-hand experience of similar crisis. An audit of other organisations' experiences will not only allow the SMEs benchmark their strengths and weaknesses but also identify resources and capabilities required to respond to similar crises (Taback, 1991).

In relation to top management attitude towards crisis events and concern for crisis management planning, the analysis revealed that to a large extent, the top management's attitude towards crisis event leads to some concern for crisis management planning among SMEs. This is in concert with previous studies which suggest that top management culture of commitment, as well as their perceptions, is crucial for effective and functional crisis management planning (Vargo and Seville, 2011; Sullivan, 2012). The possibility exists that in situations where the top management do not attach much importance to the occurrence of crisis, such organisations will also not see the need to prepare and plan for crisis. For example, in this research, about 28.4% of the respondents believed that crisis cannot occur to their organisation while about 25.5% of the respondents believed that crisis does not occur in their field. This means that these organisations will make little or no effort to prepare and plan for crisis since they do not believe it could occur in their organisation. Importantly, top management should recognise that given the possibility of crisis occurrence, there is a need to prepare and plan for crisis management and also strive to develop a culture that stresses the importance of crisis management planning.

Beyond evaluating the influence of the individual variables on the degree of concern for crisis management planning, we also carried out tests to determine the level of dependence on the variables. The results of the study showed that the degree of concern for crisis management planning is more dependent on awareness of crisis management planning than either top management attitude or actual crisis experience; both of which comparatively generate less concern for crisis management planning. Between the latter two however, we observed that the attitude of top management towards crisis events generates more concern for crisis management planning when compared to actual crisis experience. Furthermore, our findings run contrary to the view that awareness of crisis management planning has less effect in changing the focus of SME managers than when they actually face the crisis at first hand (Herbane, 2010). This is indicated by the finding that the actual occurrence of crisis generated a little concern for crisis management planning due to the impact of the experienced crisis on the organisation being either insignificant or minor. It is unlikely for SMEs to have significant concern for never-before experienced crises, or crises experienced with minor or insignificant impact on the organisation due to a natural tendency for passivity among

organisations towards potential crisis (Spillan and Hough, 2003). For instance, about 31% of the respondents indicated that they were not concerned about potential future crisis. However, this may vary significantly if these respondent organisations had experienced crisis of a severe nature. This raises another scope for further consideration to investigate varying severity of crisis experiences and implications for crisis management planning.

In summation, in addressing the aim of critically examining factors that generate concern for crisis management planning in Nigerian SMEs by considering four variables; we argue that awareness of crisis management planning has a significant effect on the degree of concern for crisis management planning amongst SMEs. We also establish that although actual experience of crisis does not give rise to significant concern for crisis management planning, this may be the exceptional case in situations where the impact of the crisis on the organisation is severe or major. Furthermore, in relation to experience of crisis events, empirical evidence suggested that crisis experience of other organisations may result in increased concern for crisis management planning by the SMEs. Although the relationship between crisis experiences of other organisations and concern for crisis management planning is very weak; it is worth noting that to some extent, the awareness of crisis occurrence in other organisations could make SMEs to develop a concern for crisis management planning. Furthermore, we observed that top management attitude towards crisis events, is moderately significant in generating concern for crisis management planning among SMEs. We therefore conclude that the degree of concern for crisis management planning depends more on awareness of crisis management planning, than on either actual experience of crisis events or top management attitude towards crisis events.

Finally, an interesting observation is the level of reliance of respondents on the existence of insurance coverage as a mechanism for dealing with crisis eventualities. The majority of respondents strongly believed that the insurance coverage they have in place is sufficient for survival in the time of crisis. This is in line with the established view that some SMEs believe that insurance coverage is adequate for survival in the time of crisis and therefore, do not see the need to plan and prepare for crisis event (Simbo, 1993). However, it is also an established fact that such insurance coverage often proves inadequate as forms of protection from crises resulting from soft organisational issues such public relation issues, damage to goodwill and reputation (Spillan and Hough, 2003). This perhaps, is an area for further investigation, to explore the relationship between (perceptions of) insurance coverage and implications for crisis management planning.

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